



## 6 Steps To Healthy Conversation

Day 3: Listen

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### *Transcript:*

Hi I am Mark Oelze. Welcome back to the PLEDGETalk online FREE mini-course where you will learn a “how to” for when communication *really* matters!

Remember how we said there are literally countless moments in conversations when we stand at a crossroads, if we say the right thing, we breathe a sigh of relief, as the conversation continues in a good direction. Say the **wrong** thing, and -- whew -- no telling where things might end up!

Yesterday we talked about how important it is to practice PAUSING at the critical moments when what we say really matters.

This is the second of 6 videos, where I will teach you the second step of PLEDGETalk. It is the “L” in PLEDGE and stands for LISTENING.

Think with me once again in the context of relational tension or a conflict. Something happens, emotions rise, and if we are not intentional about communicating in a healthy manner, things will quickly go from bad to worse. Someone needs to hit that PAUSE button RIGHT NOW to dial down, start thinking straight, and remind ourselves of our PLEDGE: to value others higher than ourselves!

THEN... when we are ready to come back to the table to begin the process of working through the conflict, one person has to be the first to volunteer to LISTEN – the second step.

Makes sense. If we are going to talk through our differences, someone has to Listen first while the other speaks. That’s a no brainer.

Here’s what typically happens however.

The conversation begins, and before long, words are spoken that become like barbs that hurt. Tones are used in what feels like an attack. We listen only long

enough to build up our line of defense. And as soon as the one speaking takes a breath -- we're in!!

Of course the problem simply worsens at this point. The person who now has -- in essence -- been forced into the listening mode, only does the same thing. They listen just long enough to build up **their** defense. And as soon as they are ready, they barge in with what they have to say!

From this point - if both are escalators - emotions continue to rise, words continue to fly, and the relationship is damaged.

If on the other hand, one or the other shies away from harsh words and tones, they tend to shut down, and pull away. This experience also damages the relationship.

What can we do differently?

Meriam-Webster defines listening this way: "It is paying attention in order to hear and consider seriously."

If we are to value others above ourselves when listening, we must listen in this way: we must pay attention to what is said in order to truly hear the heart of what they are saying so we can then seriously consider it.

In short, we must listen to genuinely understand NOT defend!

That means when your co-worker says: "you ALWAYS do that!" You have to practice dodge ball - and just let that ALWAYS word fly by! Or when you hear that tone which causes you to want to fight, you have to -- shake it off -- SO THAT YOU CAN STAY LISTENING! So that you can keep paying attention to what your co-worker is saying, to genuinely hear their heart, and then seriously consider what they say!

Think of it in another way: wives when you are talking to your husband and he suddenly shuts down, SOMETHING just happened. If you ask him what and he begins to tell you, pause and LISTEN! Don't interrupt. Don't defend. Don't tell him he is wrong or you didn't mean it that way. Just LISTEN! Pay attention to what he says, in order to hear the heart of what he is saying, and then seriously consider it!

Remember what I experienced when my daughter told me she felt like I had treated her more like a child than an adult? I wanted to tell her she was wrong; she had misinterpreted my email; I was only trying to help. BUT I **knew** that would shut her down. SO I put my mouth and brain on Pause to dial down my emotions, get the rational part of my brain back online, and shift my heart into the position once again of valuing her above myself. I knew I had to LISTEN. So I

quickly readjusted my ears to pay attention to what she was saying, so I could hear her heart and seriously consider what she was saying.

Rather than defending myself, the next words out of my mouth were something like: "huh - you felt like I was treating you like a child - how so? How did I make you feel that way? Tell me more."

I sought not only to hear and consider seriously what she was saying, I was intentional about drawing her out to hear everything I could about how I made her feel. I wanted to listen in order to understand, not defend. Even more so, I wanted her to have the experience of a Dad who REALLY listened, so in the future she would feel free to talk with me about anything that was on her heart.

You see - there is nothing more important on earth than relationships. And there's no relationship here on earth more important to me than my wife and children. Because of that I will demonstrate to them to the best of my ability over and over again when I relate to them, that I value them above myself.

Ok, here is your challenge for today:

PRACTICE LISTENING -- really listening -- everywhere you go. With family members, with friends and co-workers, with your boss, with your neighbor, and even the cashier as you walk through the line at the grocery store.

PRACTICE LISTENING TO EVERYONE! Pay attention to what they are saying, so you can hear their heart and seriously consider what they are saying.

And if you find yourself in the midst of a tense moment or even full blown conflict be absoluteLY sure you PAUSE and then work at LISTENING to genuinely understand and not defend!

See you tomorrow with the third of six steps in the PLEDGEtalk process!